

November 10, 2009

Indian Stream Health Center, Inc., Purchases Health Center Building

The Board of Directors of Indian Stream Health Center, Inc., is pleased to announce the purchase of the facility from which residents of Colebrook and surrounding communities have received primary care for more than 30 years. The original owners of the building included Dr. Gifford and his wife Dr. Parsons who relocated from their office in downtown Colebrook to the new building on "hospital road" in the summer of 1979. Within a short period of time, additional medical providers, both physicians and a nurse practitioner, joined them in the new, state of the art medical facility. There were as many as five general practitioners, a nurse practitioner and a general surgeon who worked together to meet the health care needs of residents of Colebrook and surrounding communities. The practitioners were part of a group practice called Indian Stream Professional Associates (ISPA) and referred to by the community as "The Clinic". Although never owned by Upper Connecticut Valley Hospital (UCVH), ISPA physicians followed patients in the hospital, delivered babies and staffed the hospital's emergency room.

Local resident and volunteer Betty Frizzell, who worked for Drs. Gifford and Parsons, described the move to the new facility as "a very exciting time and an important step in delivering quality health care to our area. The move to one facility heralded a change from individual providers working independently to a team approach to medical care."

That team approach remains at Indian Stream today and, in fact, has been expanded. Indian Stream Health Center is now a Federally Qualified Health Center and its policies are guided by a volunteer board of directors, most of whom are patients of the health center. In addition to the care of patients with an urgent illness or chronic disease, the health center provides a myriad of services both within the walls of its facility as well as in venues throughout its service area. Partnering with state, regional, and local agencies the health center now provides numerous services including: family planning, preventive healthcare, low-cost prescription medications, mental health and substance abuse counseling, dental, vision care, health education, and screening programs.

"Although health care has changed dramatically in the last few decades," according to John Fothergill M.D., Medical Director, "the basics remain the same. People want compassionate, caring, and well qualified health care providers to be available when they or their family members are ill. As a physician in Colebrook for more than twenty years, I can assure the community that we at Indian Stream want the same. We want to care for residents when they or their loved ones are ill and we would like to help them maintain wellness. As a Federally Qualified Health Center, we provide a discounted fee schedule for those residents with financial needs; we offer a low-cost medication program and assist eligible patients to access free medications through pharmaceutical assistance programs. In short, ISHC staff pledge to provide individuals, as well as the community, the full range of primary and preventive health care services."

According to Shirley Powell, Indian Stream CEO, “The purchase of the facility will enable the health center to make necessary renovations to the present building to assure compliance with the conditions of the Americans with Disabilities Act as well as increased privacy requirements.” Powell further stated that, “With funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the Board of Directors and leadership staff of Indian Stream Health Center anticipate a building expansion will be started in spring 2010. The expansion will facilitate the move of administrative staff from the present building which will provide for an increase in clinical and outreach space. Present plans for the expansion accommodate the growth of behavioral health services as well.”

Describing her experiences over the 29 years she has been employed in various administrative positions at the health center, Nancy Rouleau says, “I have always had the opportunity for direct contact with patients and that is what I absolutely love about my job here, especially now as a full time receptionist. Although it has been difficult at times to experience changing providers, one fact remains the same: we are all here to help take care of our friends and neighbors. Another change that has also been very helpful is going to electronic scheduling and medical records. It has reduced a lot of time doing paper work and is much more efficient. It is exciting to realize that our facility is now owned by the community board and that renovation and expansion plans are underway that are greatly needed. I am very happy to still be a part of this organization and look ahead to even more progress as a Federally Qualified Health Center, which has opened many doors for expanded health care services to our area.”